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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
03/27/26 -- Vol. 44, No. 39, Whole Number 2425

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An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at
http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Middletown (NJ) Public Library Science Fiction Discussion Group:

April 2, 2026: COUNTDOWN (1967) & THE PILGRIM PROJECT
by Hank Searls

Picks for Turner Classic Movies for April (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

[It's getting harder to do this, because Turner isn't posting its upcoming films as early in the previous month as they used to. It wasn't until two days ago that they finally posted the full April listings.]

My obvious recommendation, given I have just finished writing about Ray Harryhausen-Charles Schneer films, is the Ray Harryhausen-Charles Schneer festival on April 15 and 16:

8:00 PM The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)
10:00 PM The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1973)
12:00 AM Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger (1977)
2:00 AM The Valley of Gwangi (1969)
4:00 AM Clash of the Titans (1981)

There is also a Roger Corman festival April 3 and 4:

8:00 PM Roger Corman: The Pope of Pop Cinema (2021)
9:00 PM A Bucket of Blood (1959)
10:15 PM The Little Shop of Horrors (1960)
11:30 PM Teenage Doll (1957)
1:00 AM Five Guns West (1955)
2:30 AM The Beast with a Million Eyes (1955)

There are two Coen Brothers films (does that constitute a festival?) on April 9 and 10:

10:00 PM No Country for Old Men (2007)
12:45 AM Blood Simple (1984)

Also, seven "Andy Hardy" films on April 6, if that's your cup of tea, and four "Nancy Drew" films on April 15, a documentary on William Wyler on April 7, and of course, a bunch of Easter films on Easter weekend.

Other films of interest:

FRIDAY, April 3

5:30 AM Seven Days in May (1964)
11:45 AM Helen of Troy (1956)
2:00 PM Land of the Pharaohs (1955)
8:00 PM Roger Corman: The Pope of Pop Cinema (2021)
9:00 PM A Bucket of Blood (1959)
10:15 PM The Little Shop of Horrors (1960)
11:30 PM Teenage Doll (1957)

SATURDAY, April 4

1:00 AM Five Guns West (1955)
2:30 AM The Beast with a Million Eyes (1955)
10:00 AM Tarzan's Hidden Jungle (1955)
12:00 PM Godspell (1973)
2:00 PM The Shoes of the Fisherman (1968)

SUNDAY, April 5

8:00 AM Watership Down (1978)
12:00 PM Ben-Hur (1959)
3:45 PM The Silver Chalice (1954)
6:15 PM The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima (1952)
10:00 PM King of Kings (1961)

MONDAY, April 6

7:00 AM Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever (1939)
8:30 AM Andy Hardy Meets Debutante (1940)
10:00 AM Andy Hardy's Private Secretary (1941)
12:00 PM Andy Hardy's Double Life (1942)
2:00 PM Andy Hardy's Blonde Trouble (1944)
4:00 PM Love Laughs at Andy Hardy (1946)
6:00 PM Andy Hardy Comes Home (1958)

TUESDAY, April 7

5:00 AM William Wyler: Forty Takes Willy (2024)

THURSDAY, April 9

10:00 PM No Country for Old Men (2007)

FRIDAY, April 10

12:45 AM Blood Simple (1984)

SATURDAY, April 11

10:00 AM Tarzan and the Lost Safari (1957)
12:00 PM Kismet (1955)

SUNDAY, April 12

2:00 AM The Bad Seed (1956)

MONDAY, April 13

12:00 AM Ballet mÃ©canique (1924)
12:30 AM A Trip to the Moon (1902)

TUESDAY, April 14

11:00 AM Ebirah, Horror of the Deep (1966)
1:45 PM Lord of the Flies (1963)
3:30 PM The Most Dangerous Game (1932)

WEDNESDAY, April 15

11:15 AM Nancy Drew: Detective (1938)
12:30 PM Nancy Drew... Reporter (1939)
1:45 PM Nancy Drew... Trouble Shooter (1939)
3:00 PM Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase (1939)
8:00 PM The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)
10:00 PM The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1973)
12:00 AM Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger (1977)
2:00 AM The Valley of Gwangi (1969)
4:00 AM Clash of the Titans (1981)

FRIDAY, April 17

8:00 PM Targets (1968)
9:45 PM Piranha (1978)
11:30 PM Queen of Blood (1966)
1:00 AM Dementia 13 (1963)
2:30 AM The Terror (1963)

SATURDAY, April 18

10:00 AM Tarzan's Fight for Life (1958)

TUESDAY, April 21

4:15 PM Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975)

THURSDAY, April 23
1:15 AM Camelot (1967)

FRIDAY, April 24
8:00 AM The Canterville Ghost (1944)
10:00 AM Beauty and the Beast (1946)

SATURDAY, April 25

1:15 AM Roger Corman: The Pope of Pop Cinema (2021)
3:45 AM Made in England: The Films of Powell and
Pressburger (2024)
10:00 AM Tarzan's Greatest Adventure (1959)
3:45 PM The Bad Seed (1956)
8:00 PM Arsenic and Old Lace (1944)

MONDAY, April 27
8:00 PM Man of La Mancha (1972)
10:30 PM More Than a Miracle (1967)

TUESDAY, April 28
6:00 AM Man of Aran (1934)
6:15 PM The Incredible Mr. Limpet (1964)

[-ecl]

Ray Harryhausen Films, Part 07 (film comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Just when you thought the Harryhausen articles were done...

There were five Harryhausen feature films that Harryhausen did not do with Charles H. Schneer:

- MIGHTY JOE YOUNG (1949)
- THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS (1953)
- THE ANIMAL WORLD (1956)
- THE STRANGE WORLD OF PLANET X (COSMIC MONSTERS) (1958)
- ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. (1966)

And since I commented on the twelve he did with Schneer, I suppose I should include these for completeness as well.

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG (1949): Harryhausen was listed as "First Technician" while Willis O'Brien was "Technical Creator". I think this may reflect that O'Brien may have designed Mighty Joe Young and other effects, but Harryhausen actually executed them.

Terry Moore said when she made the film, she figured it would be one of her lesser-known films. Little did she know--it is probably her only film that most people know. This is a common story. Jack Arnold was surprised to discover he had become an auteur figure in science fiction film. And many of the leading ladies in 1950s science fiction films discovered that they had a profitable second career selling autographed photos and as guests of science fiction and film conventions.

The nightclub destruction scene is truly amazing: incredibly complicated, with not just one or two creatures to animate, but many levels of animation, including large amount of falling material which also needed to be animated frame by frame.

Unlike later films of Harryhausen, there were not even drawings in the actors' scripts to help them visualize their scenes.

Released theatrically 27 July 1949.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041650/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1013884-mighty_joe_young

THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS (1953): THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS was Ray Harryhausen's first solo feature film effort. (He did most of the stop motion work on MIGHTY JOE YOUNG (1949), but Willis O'Brien got the official credit.) One can quibble about the construction of the Beast--though it is called a dinosaur, its legs come out from its sides rather than extending directly down. The latter is one of the defining features of a dinosaur.

The opening talks about "X-Day" and H-Hour"; I guess "D-Day" was taken. Luckily movies got rid of those annoying opening narrations, or at least changed them to written scrolls, which were famously used in the "Star Wars" films.

George says he can't move and something is wrong with his legs, and then immediately after, he moves around, including his legs.

Released theatrically 13 June 1953.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045546/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/beast_from_20000_fathoms

[-ecl]

IF ANYONE BUILDS IT, EVERYONE DIES by Eliezer Yudkowsky and Nate Soares (comments by Jerry Williams):

I have not read this book [IF ANYONE BUILDS IT, EVERYONE DIES: WHY SUPERHUMAN AI WOULD KILL US ALL], although when I hear folks getting paranoid about how AI could kill us all, I feel compelled to point out one crucial fact:

If you think that this *can* happen, you need to assume that it already *did* happen. It's a big universe. Maybe that's the missing factor in the Drake equation. It's not enough to stop it on our planet, you'd need to go back in time and make sure that no other civilization ever did it. Or you need to figure out how to defend yourself against it before it comes for you.

In *that* context, what could possibly defend us from an AI intent on conquering/destroying/replacing all organic life in the universe? Ultimately you'll need some sort of AI defenders, presumably. So the key isn't how to block AI from going forward, it's building one correctly and in time to protect against something like that. I'm not saying that this defender necessarily needs to be ASI or even AGI, but it's going to need to be (and learn) smart and fast.

Fortunately (or not depending on how close you believe the DARK FOREST may be), we're nowhere near truly self-aware AI, although the cat is already out of the bag to the degree that rogue governments and individuals are using generative AI for evil purposes, and that can't be stopped easily without some sort of AI defense.

So maybe let's focus on building that instead. [-gm]

Evelyn notes:

That all civilizations are eventually destroyed by AI has been given as a possible solution to the Fermi Paradox. See, for example

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/most-aliens-may-be-artificial-intelligence-not-life-as-we-know-it/>

[-ecl]

Notes on DUNE MESSIAH by Frank Herbert (comments by Paul S. R. Chisholm)

The first chapter is a historical overview. Each of the next sixteen chapters depicts a meeting, usually a conspiracy; often, a single sentence of dialogue is followed by multiple chapters of introspection: "What did he really mean by that?" (Really, could none of these meetings have been an email?) Finally, in chapter 18 (of 24), something happens. More actions and more meetings lead to the book's finale.

Herbert introduces some "technologies" that seem more like fantasy than science fiction. Functional artificial eyes made of steel. Radiation that produces a very specific, peculiar damage. Cloning, or something like it. Human shapeshifters.

The novel advances the story of the Atreides family. Despite my tone, I think I enjoyed it. Onto the third book. [-psrc]

Dangers of A.I. (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Apparently, one danger is dancing robots going rogue:

<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/viral-dancing-robot-haidilao-22088101.php>

(Though apparently in this case the problem was error on the part of the humans who placed the robot too close to the dining table.) [-ecl]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

More from ORWELL'S ESSAYS by George Orwell (Everyman, ISBN 978-0-375-41503-6):

"As I Please 10" (Tribune, 4 February 1944): In this essay we see the beginnings of that aspect of 1984 where the government re-writes history. He writes, "Up to a fairly recent date, the major events recorded in the history books probably happened. It is probably true that the battle of Hastings was fought in 1066, that Columbus discovered America, that Henry VIII had six wives, and so on. A certain degree of truthfulness was possible so long as it was admitted that a fact may be true even if you don't like it."

He then gives an example of how history books are written by the winners: "This kind of thing is happening all the time. Out of the millions of instances which must be available, I will choose one which happens to be verifiable. During part of 1941 and 1942, when the Luftwaffe was busy in Russia, the German radio regaled its home audiences with stories of devastating air raids on London. Now, we are aware that those raids did not happen. But what use would our knowledge be if the Germans conquered Britain? For the purposes of a future historian, did those raids happen, or didn't they? The answer is: If Hitler survives, they happened, and if he falls they didn't happen. So with innumerable other events of the past ten or twenty years. Is the Protocols of the Elders of Zion a genuine document? Did Trotsky plot with the Nazis? How many German aeroplanes were shot down in the Battle of Britain? Does Europe welcome the New Order? In no case do you get one answer which is universally accepted because it is true: in each case you get a number of totally incompatible answers, one of which is finally adopted as the result of a physical struggle. History is written by the winners."

Admittedly this addresses only a single re-write, but there is no reason not to extend this to constantly changing the "truth", as we have been seeing even now. Orwell at least has some optimism: "There is some hope ... that the liberal habit of mind, which thinks of truth as something outside yourself, something to be discovered, and not as something you can make up as you go along, will survive."

"The English People" (written in 1944, published in 1947): This long essay (40 pages in the Everyman edition) was commissioned by Orwell's editor on request from the Ministry of Information. Orwell disliked it, described it as "silly" and "propaganda" and refused to allow it to be reprinted in his lifetime. (Given that he lists the national characteristics as "suspicion of foreigners, sentimentality about animals, hypocrisy, exaggerated class distinctions and an obsession with sport," I'm not sure who he was propagandizing for.) Now it is available in this Everyman collection, as well as in ORWELL'S ENGLAND from Penguin.

The six sections are "England at First Glance", "The Moral Outlook of the English People", "The Political Outlook of the English People", "The English Class System", "The English Language", and "The Future of the English People". While many

of his claims (and predictions) are questionable, the section on the English class system is certainly worth reading (especially for those who didn't grow up in it), and I found the section on the English language of great interest. On the other hand, the section on the future of the English people suffers from the same problems as Orwell's other predictions--or anyone's, come to that. For example, he thinks that England "will remain on good terms with Russia and Europe, will keep its special links with America and the Dominions, and will solve the problem of India in some amicable way." [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Have you noticed the way people's intelligence
capabilities decline sharply the minute they start
waving guns around?

--Dr. Who

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